



Superior Court of California

COUNTY OF VENTURA
Hall of Justice
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Michael D. Planet
Executive Officer/Clerk
and Jury Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEPENDENCY DRUG COURT TO HOLD FIRST GRADUATION

On Thursday, September 27, 2001, the Ventura Superior Court will hold a ceremony to honor its first Dependency Drug Court graduate. The ceremony will be held in Courtroom 30 at 3:00 p.m. Several other program participants will also be recognized during the ceremony.

Dependency Drug Court is a program for mothers who have given birth to newborns prenatally exposed to alcohol or drugs. It encompasses an initial assessment, weekly court supervision, coordinated case management, increased access to treatment, development of transitional housing, child development monitoring and intervention services, and a six-month follow-up family assessment. Participation is voluntary and subject to the discretion of the Dependency Drug Court judge. The program has been in operation since December, 2000.

The goal of Dependency Drug Court is to provide the earliest possible intervention for newborns prenatally exposed to alcohol or drugs by providing a safe environment for these children while strengthening the ability of their family to care for them.

Mothers in the program are assigned a Children and Family Services social worker who coordinates all needed support services and provides ongoing case management. The assigned social worker conducts weekly reviews and coordinates the required drug

testing for each participant using Human Services Agency contracted clinics. Graduated sanctions ranging from decreased visitation and/or supervised visitation to termination of parental rights in accordance with statutory requirements can be imposed for non-compliance.

Agencies providing services to mothers and infants within the Dependency Drug Court meet regularly to discuss progress toward goals, areas for intervention and other needed services. Frequent reviews by the court help provide the motivation for change and continued improvement by acknowledging successes as well as addressing issues when participants have difficulty meeting program requirements.

Dependency Drug Court participants must be a Ventura County resident with no history of violence against children, no pending felonies or violations of probation. They must agree to participate in treatment, demonstrate a desire for family reunification and retention of child custody, possess the ability to provide necessary care for their children and have an ability to benefit from the program services. Successful completion of the program results in early reunification of the family.

The Dependency Drug Court represents the collaborative effort of the Ventura Superior Court; Ventura County Public Health, Ventura County Health Services Agency Children and Family Services, Ventura County Behavioral Health Alcohol and Drug Programs, CalWORKs, Job and Career Centers, Prototypes Women's Center, and Casa Latina.

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